



To: Michael Rademacher

Date: April 13, 2016

Memorandum

From: Stephen Derdarian

Project #: 13474

Re: Arlington: Massachusetts Avenue Streetscape Concept Plan
Public Meeting 1: Attendee Input

This meeting was held to inform the public about the Massachusetts Avenue Streetscape Concept Plan and solicit input.

Town Manager Adam Chapdelaine introduced the project with an overview of goals and Dept. of Public Works Director Michael Rademacher followed with detail on the scope and intent of the work being performed.

Geoffrey Morrison-Logan, Director of Urban Planning and Landscape Architecture for VHB, Inc. provided an overview of VHB's ongoing consulting services on the project. Stephen Derdarian, VHB Director of Landscape Architecture Design, then gave a detailed presentation of the ongoing inventory of existing conditions, sharing annotated aerial plans indicating existing conditions accompanied by photos of the character and issues along the Massachusetts Avenue corridor extending from Mill Street to Pond Lane.

Upon completion of the presentation, a break-out session was conducted with attendees divided into four groups, each moderated by a VHB representative, to share thoughts on the existing streetscape's strengths/assets, weaknesses/issue, opportunities and discussing visions for streetscape improvements. Upon completion of the break-out session each group's input was presented. Below is a summary of common themes learned from the public input break-out sessions followed by each group's detailed input.

Summary of common strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and visions for the streetscape:

Strengths/Assets:

- Broadway Plaza: expand and beautify
- Local businesses, restaurants and historic homes
- String of walkable park areas and connections
- Historic character (buildings/facades)
- Push to make this part of the Cultural District
- Integrate with the CLAMP project
- Multi-modal features/transit connections/bikeway
- Rail trail

Weaknesses/Issues:

- Aged lighting (concrete poles) and uneven sidewalks
- Currently not a people friendly environment
- Traffic through-volumes and high speeds
- Crossing streets is very difficult
- Signage is lacking
- ADA issues at Whittemore Park and elsewhere
- Improved maintenance needed (snow clearing of sidewalks, walkway conditions, etc.)

- Flooding on Pond Lane
- Mass. Ave bike lane ends suddenly
- Vehicular link between Broadway and Mass Ave is disruptive to pedestrians
- Loading zone in Broadway Plaza not pedestrian friendly

Opportunities:

- Broadway Plaza and Memorial Park: combine them
- Eliminate the median to allow for increased pedestrian area widths
- Extend bike lanes (or sharrows if necessary) and provide bike parking
- Introduce public art throughout the corridor
- Pull the East Arlington project treatments west into this project
- Better lighting that is also historic in nature/consistent with East Arlington
- Public restrooms
- ADA compliant sidewalk designs
- Improve entrance to the Garden between Town Hall and Robbins Library
- Thin the trees, introduce wider walkways, add plazas and benches, eliminate fence at Whittemore Park
- Rethink Kickstand Park, introduce lower plants and more seating opportunities
- Connectivity of paths

Visions for Streetscape Improvements:

- Reinforce sense of the Town Center and celebrate Arlington as a special place
- Further develop the string of public spaces
- Ped-centric design approach
- Enhance Civic Block/Cultural District as a key element of the project
- Strengthen multi-modal features, especially for cyclists
- Green/sustainable/low maintenance design approaches and material recommendations
- Improved wayfinding and interpretive signage
- Accessibility
- Attractive Broadway Plaza (irrigation, benches, outdoor restroom)
- Bike parking and landscape elements in front of Town Hall
- Drainage improvements

Group 1 input on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and visions for the streetscape:

Strengths/Assets:

- Public spaces/green spaces
- Bike paths
- Restaurants
- Civic buildings
- Historic character

Weaknesses/Issues:

- Aged sidewalks and lighting
- Not a people friendly environment
- Traffic through-volumes
- Snow clearing of sidewalks

Opportunities:

- Broadway Plaza and Memorial Park: combine them
- Town Hall
- Garden between Town Hall and Robbins Library
- Whittemore Park
- Eliminate the median to allow for increased pedestrian area widths

Visions for Streetscape Improvements:

- Destination
- Connection from one side of Mass Avenue to the other
- Public art
- Pedestrian lighting and seating
- Community gathering areas
- Fountain
- Dog watering station(s)
- Bike racks

Group 2 input on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and visions for the streetscape:

Strengths/Assets:

- Broadway Plaza: expand and beautify
- Public and remaining historic buildings/facades
- Local businesses, restaurants and historic homes
- Push to make this part of the Cultural District
- CLAMP project
- Library improvements
- Transit connections

Weaknesses/Issues:

- Signage is lacking
- Mass. Ave bike lane ends suddenly
- Concrete lightpoles
- Brick is difficult to walk on
- Crossing streets is very difficult
- ADA issues at Whittemore Park
- Thinning of tree canopy
- Maintenance needed
- Flooding on Pond Lane

Opportunities:

- Extend bike lanes (or sharrows if necessary)
- Pull the East Arlington project treatments west into this project
- Better lighting that is also historic in nature/consistent with East Arlington
- Property owners need to maintain their property
- Public restrooms
- Brick okay if ADA compliant

Visions for Streetscape Improvements:

- Make it look historical and very green (many trees, etc.) but easy to maintain
- Make a place/destination
- Better drainage and wayfinding
- Attractive Broadway Plaza (irrigation, benches, outdoor restroom)
- Bike parking and landscape elements in front of Town Hall
- Better drainage, wayfinding on bike path and for cars to key assets

Group 3 input on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and visions for the streetscape:

Strengths/Assets:

- CLAMP project
- Connecting bikeway
- Very multi-modal : bus, pedestrian, bikes, cars
- String of walkable park areas and connections
- Rail trail
- Children's tai chi at fire station

Weaknesses/Issues:

- Lack of connection between Broadway Plaza and Monument Park
- Buses standing at the intersection of Broadway and Mass Ave are not conducive to a public park and unsafe for children
- This section of the corridor is currently a very uncomfortable place to ride a bike (East Arlington is much better)
- Speed limits too high, not pedestrian and cyclist friendly
- Difficult for cyclists to get onto Mass Ave
- Poor walkways
- Brigham Square has many blind people in the area, need better connections for them

Opportunities:

- Close off the vehicle entrance from Broadway to Mass Ave and connect Broadway Plaza to Monument Park
- Extend bike lanes and make 10' wide
- Provide bike parking
- Arch/gateway to Spy Pond Park

- Remove or open up the wall at Robbins Park to better invite people in
- Introduce public art
- Use concrete walks with paver trim for improved accessibility
- Thin the trees, introduce wider walkways, add plazas and benches, eliminate fence at Whittemore Park
- Rethink Kickstand Park, introduce lower plants and more seating opportunities

Visions for Streetscape Improvements:

- Enhance Civic Block/Cultural District as a key element of the project
- Strengthen multi-modal features, especially for cyclists
- Reinforce sense of the Town Center
- Further develop the string of public spaces
- Ped-centric design approach
- A public art corridor
- Must celebrate Arlington as a special place
- Green/sustainable design approaches and material recommendations

Group 4 input on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and visions for the streetscape:

Strengths/Assets:

- Trees, walkways, biking
- Commercial and civic activities
- Restaurants and businesses

Weaknesses/Issues:

- Signal timing
- Uneven walkways
- Link between Broadway Mass Ave - Acton Street
- Loading zone in Broadway Plaza

Opportunities:

- Move small memorial and extend Acton Street to Mass Ave

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- Introduce a parking garage
- Public use near fire station and plaza
- Connectivity of paths

Visions for Streetscape Improvements:

- Accessibility
- Balance between parking and plaza use
- Performance areas and public usage
- Signage and access to Town Hall park
- Accessibility to Spy Pond